

United Nations

Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- + Secretary-General, witnessing signing of Framework Climate Change Convention in Rio de Janeiro, says Convention is "a modest first step" which contains important commitments to take action.
- + Security Council endorses Secretary-General's recommendation to extend mandate of United Nations Mission for Referendum in Western Sahara until end of August; talks currently under way between parties concerned and Secretary-General's Special Representative to reactivate settlement plan for territory.
- + Secretary-General recommends Security Council extend mandate of United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus for another six-month period, until 15 December; says size and mandate of Force might be changed.
- + Secretary-General leaves Rio for official visits to Uruguay and Chile.
- + Main Committee of Environment and Development Conference in Rio establishes eight contact groups to complete negotiations on unresolved issues facing Rio Summit.

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The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, one of the central elements of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), now taking place in Rio de Janeiro, was opened for signature at a ceremony this morning. President Fernando Collor of Brazil, host of the Conference, was the first signer.

In an address, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali described the Convention as "a modest first step" which contained important commitments for action. It was a pragmatic convention, he said, reflecting the prevailing political realities and economic caution. An "ideal" convention, the strength of which would have been "eviscerated by the absence of key actors", would not have been much more than a slogan.

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"One may hope," the Secretary-General continued, "that its very modesty will motivate Governments and observers to maintain constructive pressure to strengthen the Convention over the coming years, as more scientific evidence comes in and as it is better appreciated that actions to protect the climate can generate economic benefits over time."

In closing, he said "we may hope that this Convention will be a building block of a world order in which all countries and all peoples will have equitable access to opportunities for sustainable development."

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The Security Council has endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendation to extend the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) until the end of August. The Mission consists at present of 349 United Nations military observers and other personnel deployed to monitor the cease-fire in the region.

In a statement issued today by Council President Peter Noterdaeme (Belgium), the Council welcomed talks now under way between the Government of Morocco, POLISARIO and the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Yaqub Khan, with a view to reactivating the settlement plan for self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. The Council asked the Secretary-General to submit at the earliest possible date a further progress report on implementation of the plan.

The Council President's statement today was in response to a report by the Secretary-General on the situation in Western Sahara, dated 29 May. The Secretary-General had reported that although cease-fire violations continued to occur and their frequency had even increased somewhat, the incidents generally had not been of a violent nature. Further, his Special Representative had been assured by both the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro (POLISARIO) and the Government of Morocco that they would make every effort to adhere to the provisions of the cease-fire agreement and to cooperate with MINURSO within the framework of the settlement plan.

The Secretary-General expressed hope that substantial progress would have been made by August to prepare the ground for holding a referendum to lead to the peaceful settlement of the Western Sahara conflict. If by that time the peace process remained deadlocked, in spite of current talks with the parties, he said, the Council might wish to consider a different approach.

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In a new report to the Security Council, the Secretary-General has recommended that it extend the mandate of the United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) for a further six-month period, until 15 December. The functions of the Force is preventing a recurrence of fighting between the two parties "remain valid and necessary", he says, until a comprehensive

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solution to the conflict is found. He notes that his recommendation will be subject to possible changes in the size and mandate of the Force following consultations with the troop-contributing countries and the two parties.

In his report of 31 May, the Secretary-General further points to the "chronic and ever-deepening financial crisis" of the Force, which, imposes a "most unfair burden" on the troop-contributing countries. The best way to finance the Force would be for the United Nations share of the costs to be financed from assessed contributions.

In a previous report, dated 3 April, the Secretary-General questioned the continuation of United Nations peace-keeping in Cyprus "on the present scale" because of "lack of progress" by the two sides -- the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot communities -- in concluding an agreement as well as the unsatisfactory financial situation of UNFICYP.

Responding to that report, the Security Council decided to remain involved in the Cyprus question "on an ongoing and direct basis". It called on the parties concerned to cooperate fully with the Secretary-General on holding a high-level international meeting to conclude an overall framework agreement.

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The Secretary-General left Rio de Janeiro this afternoon for official visits to Uruguay and Chile.

In Montevideo tomorrow, 5 June, he will have talks with the President of Uruguay, Luis Alberto Lacalle, and in the afternoon will meet with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hector Gross Espiell.

On Sunday, the Secretary-General will fly to Chile, and on Monday morning, 8 June, in Santiago, he is to meet with the Chilean Minister for Foreign Affairs, Enrique Silva Cimma. In the evening he will be the guest of honor at a dinner given by President Patricio Aylwin Azocar, at the Palacio de la Moneda.

On 9 June, the Secretary-General will visit the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), where he will meet with its Executive Director, Gert Rosenthal. He will also participate in a meeting with the heads of United Nations offices in Chile. Mr. Boutros-Ghali is scheduled to return to Rio de Janeiro that afternoon.

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At its first meeting this afternoon, the Main Committee of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) decided, without a vote, to establish eight open-ended contact groups, open to all Governments attending the Conference. The aim of the contact groups is to complete negotiations on the main outstanding issues before the Conference, including

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financial resources, technology transfer, atmosphere, forest principles and institutions for continuing UNCED's work.

In an opening statement, Committee Chairman Tommy Koh (Singapore) reminded delegations that "Agenda 21", UNCED's plan of action, contains more than 80 bracketed paragraphs. To meet the deadline of 10 June, he proposed, and the Committee approved, the establishment of the contact groups and the holding of night meetings as well as meetings on Saturday, 6 June.

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